



Forest
Service

Clearwater National Forest
12730 Highway 12
Orofino, ID 83544-4541

Nez Perce National Forest
104 Airport Road
Grangeville, ID 83530

File Code: 1950-3/1560
Route To:

Date: February 14, 2013

Honorable, Silas C. Whitman
Chairman
Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee
P.O. Box 305
Lapwai, ID 83540

Dear Chairman Whitman,

I would like to invite the Nez Perce Tribe to be involved in developing our Roadside Hazard Tree Project.

Consistent with our government to government relationship I am sending you this information for consultation on this project which will involve the Salmon River, Red River and Powell Ranger Districts of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. We met initially with your staff to discuss the initiation of this project with the Nez Perce Tribe staff at your on January 17th, 2013 quarterly meetings. I would be happy to schedule a time to discuss the Roadside Hazard Tree Project with the Tribal Executive Committee or other tribal department representatives if the tribe feels that this would be beneficial for better understanding of what is planned and/or to express any concerns.

The Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest interdisciplinary team (IDT) is in the process of compiling and analyzing information to write an environmental assessment (EA). We are seeking input on how the proposed actions might affect areas that are culturally significant to your tribe, such as traditional plant use areas, traditional mineral use areas, shrines or important geological formations, archaeological sites, or any other areas.

Please review the following proposal and submit your comments as described below so they can be included in our analysis. I invite you to participate in the analysis and further refinement of this proposed action by letting me know if you have issues or concerns with the proposed activities.

Introduction

The project responds directly to the need to reduce threats to Forest visitors and employees by removing fire damaged and otherwise weakened trees on approximately 1,733 acres located 200 feet on either side of National Forest system (NFS) roads impacted by the 2012 wildfires. While this project is intended to address potential hazards along many of the roads open to the public or used for administrative purposes within the fire perimeters, it will not address all of the roads. The roads identified for treatment have been decided by frequency of use and accessibility.

The Sheep Fire (Salmon River Ranger District), McGuire Complex (Red River Ranger District), and Fern Fire (Powell Ranger District) that occurred in 2012 resulted in hazardous tree conditions on approximately 50 miles of NFS roads (see enclosed project proposal maps). Trees that are dead or dying, including from fire mortality, damage (crown, root, and bole scorch), beetle-infestation, defoliation from spruce budworm, as well as other existing dead trees would be targeted for removal. Trees that do not pose a hazard to people or property would be retained. After felling, trees could be left on site, bucked to reduce fuel hazard, decked along the road, and/or removed from the area. When possible, merchantable



trees would be sold to offset the cost to implement the project. There would be no permanent or temporary roads or landings constructed.

Purpose and Need

Purpose: Improve public safety by reducing hazard trees along roadsides and recover economic value of merchantable logs removed to offset the cost of mitigating hazards in these areas.

Objective: Provide for public and employee safety by removing hazardous, fire-damaged trees along roads, as well as any non-fire damaged trees with structural defects that are likely to cause failure in all or part of the tree. Hazard trees are trees that are capable of falling and hitting the area of the ground containing the road surface, cut slope and fill slope (road prism) within the next 5-years.

Need for Action: The Sheep, McGuire Complex, and Powell Complex created many hazards to road users due to the large amount of fire damaged or killed trees. Although some hazard trees were felled because of their immediate danger to suppression activities, a large number of hazard trees remain or have become weakened since suppression activities. The roads within the fires perimeter are high risk roads and are utilized by Forest Service employees, contractors, as well as forest visitors (for recreational activities, wood-cutting, hunting and fishing). There are many dead or dying trees along the road system that have the potential to impact the road when they fail.

Table 1. Roads identified for hazard tree removal.

Sheep Fire		McGuire Complex Fire	
Road Numbers	Miles	Road Numbers	Miles
441	2.5	1150	2.5
9300	2.5	1194	0.25
9300A	1.5	1190	2.0
2038	4.5	1190B	1.5
2038E	1.0	1190B1	0.2
2038H	1.0	1190B2	0.3
2038I	0.25	222	5.0
9303	4.5	1188	3.0
9303C	0.5	9535	≤ 6
9303E	0.2	9505	≤ 6
9303F	0.5		
9303G	1.0		
9303I	0.5		
9306	0.2		
Total	20.65 miles	Total	26.75 miles

In 2008, the Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C), passed after the 1987 Forest Plans for both Forests, established management direction for the roadless areas in Idaho. The Rule designates 250 Idaho Roadless Areas (IRAs) and establishes five management themes that provide prohibitions with exceptions or conditioned permissions governing road construction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral development. Areas designated in Idaho Roadless have been identified in the RHT project.

Table 2. Acres proposed for treatment per fire to show the number of acres inside and outside of Roadless.

Project Area	Road Treatment Acres	Treatment Acres In Roadless Areas (Backcountry Restoration Only)	Treatment Acres Outside of Roadless
Fern	206	206	0
Sheep	813	45	768
McGuire	627	21	606
Total	1,646 acres	272 acres	1,374 acres

The specific Idaho Roadless Area management themes have been identified by fire and by acre to clarify allowable treatments. Only acres within the Back Country Restoration Roadless Theme will be treated.

Table 3. Idaho Roadless Areas, management classification (theme), by fire area.

Idaho Roadless Area	Management Classification	Fern Fire (acres)	McGuire Complex (acres)	Sheep Fire (acres)
North Fork Spruce-White Sand IRA	Wild Land Recreation	1,114		
	Primitive	2,230		
	Backcountry/Restoration	7,019		
Sneakfoot Meadows IRA	Primitive	106		
	Backcountry/Restoration	750		
	Forest Plan Special Area	49		
Dixie Summit-Nut Hill IRA	Backcountry/Restoration		2,513	
	Forest Plan Special Area		27	
Gospel Hump IRA	Backcountry/Restoration		2,581	
John Day IRA	Backcountry/Restoration			415
Little Slate Creek IRA	Backcountry/Restoration			1,061
Little Slate Creek North IRA	Backcountry/Restoration			2,451
	Forest Plan Special Area			823
Not Roadless		118	17,386	6,790

How to Provide Comments

You are encouraged to take part in the environmental process for the Roadside Hazard Tree Project by submitting written or oral comments on the proposed action or visiting with Forest Service officials. Comments will be accepted for up to the close of business on the 15th day following publication in the Lewiston Tribune. Comments submitted after that date will be accepted, but our ability to respond effectively could be reduced. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 7:30 am to 4:30 pm (PST), Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Written comments are to be sent with attention to Mark Craig, Salmon River District at 304 Slate Creek Drive White Bird, Idaho 83554. To submit comments electronically please put Roadside Hazard Tree Project in the subject line and send to comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us. To fax your comments call 208-839-2730. If you choose to comment on the proposal, please include the following: (1) your name, address, and (if possible) your telephone number, and organization represented (if any); (2) title of the project on which you are submitting comments; (3) specific facts and related rationale concerning this project that you feel should be considered. Additional information regarding how to comment can be found at 36 CFR 215.6. Please note that all comments received will be included in the public record; therefore, names, phone numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses of participants cannot be kept confidential [7 CFR Part 1 Subpart B 1-27(c)]. This project will follow the regulations specified under the 36 CFR 215 subpart A on the National Forest Service website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/apple/36cfr215a.pdf>.

For further information on this project, contact Sharen Parker, Team Leader at spark@fs.fed.us. Thank you for your involvement in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

Sincerely,

Mark Craig
Acting District Ranger
Salmon River Ranger District

Enclosure –
Roadside Hazard Tree Project - Vicinity Map